



Sexual Economies of Caste and Gender

**The Case of Naxalbari
(1967–1975)**

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Research and Development



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CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Introduction.....	1
Situating ‘Semi-feudal’ and ‘Semi-colonial’	2
Anxious Masculinity and the Rhetoric of Revenge.....	5
Discourse of Decolonisation and Practice of Iconoclasm	8
A Speculative Conclusion	11
References	15

ABSTRACT

While periodising the 1960s, Frederick Jameson wrote that thinking in terms of historical periods and working with models of historical periodization were ‘theoretically unfashionable to say the least’ (1984, 178). The fear of becoming unfashionable, theoretically or otherwise, is difficult to overcome. My first attempts to look for the Naxalbari movement in its heterogeneous registers of archival documents, academic history, and legends circulated in different *adda* However, brought forth a possibly theoretically unfashionable question: in a movement like Naxalbari, where the gaps between rural and urban; peasantry and intelligentsia; party and people were being consciously negotiated, how could ‘half the sky’ remain invisible, inaudible? As the primary question began to spawn a series of queries, the most compelling task became situating Naxalite women within their specific locations. Caste, with all its ramifications and its complex history of relation with gender, loomed large over any attempt to access activists’ diverse experiences of political participation and political violence as women, as Naxalites, and as women Naxalites. Even though caste found rarely any mention in archival, historical, or imagined narratives of Naxalbari, gendered experiences of the movement unerringly pointed at its presence, albeit obliquely at times.

This paper traces how I picked my way through a maze of overlapping categories like region, class, tribe, and social factors like sexual division of labour, cultural representations and access to formal education to understand the framing of Naxalbari through caste and gender. From women’s narratives of their participation in the movement, caste emerges as a set of intricate relations, which, despite its invisibility in the Naxalite ‘literate’ ideology, shaped activists’ ideas of revolution. This intricate set of relations wove in the connections between caste status, women’s sexuality and their participation in wage labour; between social mobility, caste conventions, and notions of domesticity; between the social history of *bhadramahila* (gentlewoman) and the political history of ‘women comrades’ in radical leftist movements. Periodising Naxalbari in terms of such gendered experiences disrupts the previous academic historiography of this movement. Exploring Naxalbari as it is memorialised and as it is imagined to have happened from the analytical point of view of gender becomes a political intervention because such an attempt opens a space where the phantasm of the movement meets with historical contingencies.

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INTRODUCTION

Tapashi Biswas belonged to the Malo caste¹ and in the late 1960s, when she was about sixteen years of age, she became a Naxalite. In the long open-ended interview with Tapashi, the affirmation of both these identities – Dalit and Naxalite – were repeated several times.² The easy confluence of both in her oral narrative gradually constructed an unexplored subject position over and above her gendered identity, her location in a remote rural place, and her extreme poverty.

Her village was a small one in Nadia district, which as she said ‘could not be located in a map’ and her family was ‘the poorest of the poor’ – a Dalit refugee family without a male earning member – eking out their living by fishing and selling vegetable at the local market, which they grew in a little plot of land. Tapashi remembered that her caste position accentuated her poverty. She was a student in her village primary school. On her way to school she often had to bear the cruel taunts of wealthy upper-caste *Kayastha* boys – ‘Look the fisherwoman now wields books instead of fishing-net!’. She remembered how during one Shibnibash fair, a very popular and well-known fair of that region, her best friend, a girl of a higher caste could not even offer her water. The desperate anger she felt as a young woman towards those upper-caste boys, the inexplicable helplessness of her upper-caste friend, the segregation of drinking water vessels in her school, found its first expression when she came in contact with urban Naxalite recruiters in her village. Though in the *baithak* meetings (small gatherings) between Naxalites and school-students the issue of caste was rarely raised, she, in her own way equated the Naxalite class-analysis with her caste-questions. Tapashi commented that caste was thus being imbricated on Naxalite class-analysis, unbeknownst to Naxalite mobilisers.

The question, which Tapashi’s entry to Naxalite politics raises, can be very simply articulated, why were the young, male, urban Naxalites not aware of the exploitation based on caste? To add to this question, it is possible to ask further, did caste have any relevance in the Naxalite ‘literate’ ideology? What was the position of caste in leftist Bengali social thought prior to the Naxalbari movement? Conceptualising Tapashi as the protagonist of the Naxalbari movement requires a more genealogical approach to the sexual economies of caste and gender than a chronological sequencing of events and adding caste and gender to the existing narratives of Naxalbari. A critical feminist history of the Naxalbari movement demands more than a descriptive narration of different roles played by women participants. Considering the paucity of academic literature on women participants, I acknowledge, writing a compensatory women’s history – punctuated by regular categories of caste and class – of this movement in itself can become an important project of research. But compensatory history presumes an already existing, alternative historical account, waiting to be recovered. Tapashi, as a protagonist of Naxalbari, challenges not only the silence and erasure of Dalit women in the ‘memory-history’ of Naxalbari but also problematises how such ‘memory-histories’ have been formulated.³

Even though Naxalbari remains perhaps one of the most well-studied revolutionary movements in postcolonial India, the masculinity of Naxalite protagonists usually remains unquestioned even unnoticed in these studies (Banerjee 1980, 1984; Dasgupta 1974; Duyker 1987; Ray 1988). In recent years with a revival of academic interest in this phase of the Naxalbari movement, perhaps initiated by the growing presence of Maoist guerrillas in contemporary Indian political scenario and following the success of Maoists in Nepal, women Naxalites have gradually started coming to the focus and gender has become an important analytical category to study this revolutionary movement (Sinha Roy 2011; Roy 2012). Drawing from the existing scholarship on caste and gender, especially in the context of Bengal, this is an effort to re-think the possibilities of a new historical analysis of Naxalbari (Bandyopadhyay

2001, 2004; Basu 2003; Chakravarti 2003; Rao 2003; Rege 2006). This paper, however, takes a rather meandering route in its search for answers because the simultaneous presence and absence of caste and gender in the Naxalbari movement and its aftermath is enmeshed in contiguous but discrete histories of leftist movements in Bengal, of colonial modernity, and of caste movements in colonial Bengal.

The historical trajectory, within which the sexual economies of caste and gender in Naxalbari need to be placed, refers to the history of the Rajbangshi Kshtriya movement in northern Bengal from 1920s, the forgotten histories Dalit refugees being packed off to the unfertile terrains of Dandakaranya after the partition in 1947, and the imagined histories of displacement and survival of Dalits in Birbhum district chronicled in Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay's novels and short stories. Sources of these histories are uneven, as well as, diverse – ranging from colonial ethnographies, newspaper reports, political pamphlets, to personal memoirs and creative literature. Weaving such multiple strands of documents into a neat narrative is, perhaps, impossible; yet the very unruly nature of these sources indicate heterogeneous excess of Naxalbari beyond the *bhadralok* leftist analytical arc. This paper does not allow the space to explore all these strands with the meticulous attention they deserve; thus, in the following three sections a few sites of such excess will be discussed to indicate how the complexities of caste and gender are intertwined in a feminist critique of Naxalbari.⁴

Situating 'Semi-feudal' and 'Semi-colonial'

The official Political Resolution of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) began with the analysis of Indian society and its principal character was marked as being both 'semi-colonial' and 'semi-feudal' at the same time.⁵ Declaring the national independence as a total sham and the parliament as a mere talking-shop were reflections of the centrality of two 'semi's in Naxalite thought, referring to a situation where big landlords forged alliance with foreign and indigenous capitalists and maintained the façade of national sovereignty (Ray 1988, 177). 'The use of the 'semi-s', writes Rabindra Ray, 'in the Naxalite characterisation thus deserves further comment' (1988,177). The 'semi-feudal' character was described in the Political Resolution as

...landlessness of about 40 percent of rural population, the back-breaking usurious exploitations, the ever-growing evictions of poor peasantry coupled with the brutal *social* [emphasis mine] oppression – ... reminiscent of the medieval ages (Ghosh 1992, 46).

An academic debate ensued with popularisation of 'semi-feudalism' and 'semi-colonialism' which discussed economic dimensions of the 'colonial mode of production' and made efforts to explain rural poverty. The *social* nature of exploitation, however, received little attention in the Naxalite discourse as well as in later debates. It is this *social* aspect, I argue, which would have been useful to link land with people; but, the meaning(s) of social must follow the present discussion on two 'semi's. Academic debates identified the 'perpetual indebtedness of the peasants and agricultural proletariat' as the principal mode of exploitation which 'ties them entirely to a particular landowner, who provides them with employment, consumption loan and working capital in exchange of loyalty and obligation' (Mitter 1977, 34). The government measures to re-distribute land in the 1950s could achieve little success in real terms.⁶ This issue of unequal distribution of land was at the heart of Naxalite declaration that 'the Indian state is the state of big landlords and comprador-bureaucrat capitalists' and influenced their consequent strategy of armed peasant revolution.

However, in spite of boldly pronouncing that the main force of revolution is the anti-feudal struggle of the peasantry, the Naxalite theoretical literature does not identify the principal modes of feudal oppression rigorously. In Rabindra Ray's analysis, 'semi-feudalism accrues from a schema which sees the

Indian economy (as all other 'underdeveloped' countries) as progressing from a state of feudalism to a state of capitalism, in which semi-feudalism is an intermediate state' (Ray 1988, 177). Ray further argues, this characterisation 'does not so much refer to facts of economy, in a 'materialist' sense, but to perceived experiences of personality which are reified into an economic terminology', and makes an excellent connection between the two 'semi's by pointing out the ways in which feudalism was linked to colonialism through this schematic framework – namely, how India 'as an agrarian economy [was] open to the vicissitudes of the world market and thus of imperial interests' (Ray 1988, 176-7). Feudalism was, in this schematic framework of historical stages, linked to colonialism through the vested interests of the ruling elite in rural and urban contexts. This crucial link in connecting feudalism with colonialism reflects on the Naxalite conceptualisation of decolonisation. Naxalite activism in their cultural front underlined their belief that decolonization remained unfinished after two decades of formal national independence. I will return to the issue of decolonisation and cultural politics at a later stage of discussion and it will suffice to flag off that the Naxalite imagination of decolonisation had serious implications for caste and gender politics of the movement.

My critical reading of the Naxalite conceptualisation of 'semi-feudal' India begins precisely at this point.⁷ The inability of 'semi-feudalism' to grasp the complexities of rural oppressive structures in the context of land-ownership is quite apparent in Tapashi's oral narrative. She recalled with humour that urban middle-class Naxalites could not identify any *jotedar* (big landlords) in this particular area of Nadia district because their conceptual tool for rural class-analysis did not allow them to analyse land-ownership in terms of smaller holdings.⁸ It took them a long time to accept the existence of local variations in the nature of land-distribution system and that the *jotedar* system was peculiar to northern West Bengal. The futile search for *jotedars* in Nadia district of southern Bengal indicates a complete disconnect between local histories of exploitation in the Naxalite discourse, as well as a homogenised iconic image of the 'village' in Naxalite imagination where specific realities of caste and gender were forgotten to make way for the undefined 'rural dispossessed'. It is, however, more disconcerting to note that the historians and/or commentators of Naxalbari have restrained their critique of materiality of the concept within a certain structure of land-ownership and credit-system while refusing to account for their *social* ramifications, or, treat the issue with an unmistakable disdain towards the fusion between social and emotional. Does 'semi-feudalism' reify Tapashi's experiences as a Dalit woman and the sanctioned ignorance of metropolitan Naxalites into an emotional rhetoric – 'perceived experiences of personality' as Ray puts it? Perhaps more importantly, it is worth asking, whether the social (and economic) reality of caste could be reduced to personal experiences within a class-based analytical framework.

Let me first concentrate on the issue of disjunct between the local histories and metropolitan models in the Naxalite discourse. It has been remarked that in early twentieth century 'no other Indian city dominated its hinterland as completely as Calcutta dominated Bengal' (Chatterji 1994, 55). *Mofussil* or 'the Provinces' has been defined as the country stations and districts, as distinguished from the 'the Presidency' or the centre/capital. In other words *mofussil* has come to signify margins of the metropolis, whether they are small towns, distinguished by their curious combination of urbanity and rusticity; or villages, existing outside all traces of urbanity. The particular cultural sensitivities of *mofussil*, their constant inferiority to Calcutta's metropolitan glamour and their inescapable dream of becoming a part of Calcutta have been reflected in various aspects of the everyday life in postcolonial Bengal. This status of Calcutta vis-à-vis *mofussil* has crystallised into two myths in the history and memory of Naxalbari. The first one involves the mythical image of Naxalites in popular memory as brilliant students

of well-known educational institutions in Calcutta who sacrificed their careers to fight for the rural poor against the state. The vision of armed peasant Naxalites has faded beyond repetitive images of the urban middle-class youth. It is an irony that the memory of ideals like ‘peasant revolution’, ‘encircling the cities with villages’, and ‘people’s war’, lives on as an event of terrible urban violence, that too chiefly in the metropolis – Calcutta.⁹ The second myth concerns the urban Naxalite vision of village as the ‘pure’ centre of revolution. The imagination of young revolutionaries was stimulated by a magic vision of village as the ‘liberated zone’, which would ultimately slay the urban monstrosity where the state machineries nestle.¹⁰ Though this ‘urban monstrosity’ was an abstract concept, Raghav Bandyopadhyay poignantly reminds in his *Journal Sottor* (2000) that, it inevitably referred to Calcutta – not the innumerable small towns or cities like Delhi, Bombay or Madras.

Given this context of the formation of Naxalite discourse and its memory-history, it is not entirely surprising that ‘semi-feudalism’ had failed to address the nuances and insights from the history of Rajbangshi caste movement in 1920s in northern Bengal, despite incorporating *jotedar* in its conceptual vocabulary. The Kshatriya movement, led by the Rajbangshi landed gentry – *jotedars* – and professional elite, was a social movement for upward caste mobility demanding recognition within the Hindu caste system and distancing from the tribal *Koch* identity bestowed on them by a section of the nineteenth century colonial ethnography (Basu 2003). The modality of the movement included demand for inclusion in Census as *Bratya* (fallen) Kshatriya, adopting caste Hindu rituals and norms, and restricting women’s freedom within a clearly demarcated ‘private’ sphere to mark caste purity (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 153).¹¹ Gender relations in the Rajbangshi community became a highly-debated issue when the Rajbangshi ‘Kshatriya Samiti’ endorsed the Hindu discourse of ‘abduction of Hindu women by lascivious Muslims’ in the 1920s to control Rajbangshi women’s mobility, labour, and sexuality as against the more traditional norms of women’s relative autonomy over their own bodies (Datta 1999, 149-227; Bandyopadhyay 2004, 187). Though the movement was concentrated in the urban areas and women of the Rajbangshi elite suffered the most, its impact was gradually felt in the rural parts and increasing popularity of following caste Hindu rituals and norms in the villages bear testimony to that (Datta 1999).

This connection between the ‘semi-feudal’ and ‘semi-colonial’ – the *jotedar* system of landholding and caste mobility – marks the transformation in the *social* axes of exploitation, chiefly articulated through the sexual economies of caste and gender. Such economies refer to the processes like the inverted relationship between ritual caste-status and women’s participation in wage-labour; the ways in which highly acclaimed and widely publicised colonial law-reforms on ‘women’s question’ – Sati Regulation Act (1829), Widow Remarriage Act (1856), Age of Consent Acts (1860 and 1891), and the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929) – ironically “provided a forum for the collusion of local patriarchal interests with the anti-women biases of British jurists and laid firm legal ground for the diminution of women’s rights in India”; how civil law-reforms carved out a space for men’s individual property rights, strengthened caste affiliations, and weakened women’s rights of inheritance by making land alienable and transferable (Agnes 2000, 120). Local variations in monitoring the sexual economies of caste and gender employed different kinds of codifying caste endogamy, or in cases of transgression, managing such lapses through specific rituals. For example, in Birbhum district (a district which experienced intense violence between the years 1970 and 1972 due to Naxalite activism and stern retaliation by the state) the Sadgop caste went through a detailed process of upward caste mobility in the nineteenth century (Sanyal 1971).¹² The common practice of maintaining sexual relationships with lower caste women (usually *Bagdi* women who formed a major section of the agricultural labour), even though

such relations could not be sanctified by marriage, was ritualised to allow for such transgressions (Sinha Roy 2006). Apart from the Sadgop men, Brahmin landlords of the district also took every possible sexual liberty in the pretext of sexual licentiousness of *Bagdi* women. In late nineteenth century a particular ritual of normalising these transgressive relations appeared. As and when an upper-caste man's sexual involvement with a *Bagdi* woman became public, he was forced to perform the lower caste profession openly as a gesture of getting included within the lower caste group and was also forced to pay for a feast with newly acquired caste brethren (Risley 1891, 90). The joyous feast, enjoyed by the community, however, was an insurance against the lingering fear of retribution among the *Bagdi* Dalits.

The issue of lower-caste/working-class women's greater sexual freedom, thus, is a rather difficult one. Freedom necessarily entails a certain amount of autonomy, and sexual autonomy of lower caste women is constricted by several factors. Though they enjoy relatively more equal status as they can earn, can practice widow remarriage, can marry by one's own choice, and can also divorce; their exposure to the public domain also render them vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Kannabiran and Kannabiran 2003). Ritual purity of a caste is correlated with the chastity of caste women and therefore sexual violation of lower caste women by upper-caste men is always a reinforcement of caste hierarchy. Moreover, public visibility and dependence on wage are translated into a popular perception of their sexual availability. Instances of landowners' sexual rights over women agricultural labourers and the plights of 'unprotected' single women workers in the labour-lines of jute-mills hardly substantiate claims of sexual autonomy (Sen 1985; Sen 1999).

If the Naxalite discourse allowed such local histories of changing social, economic, and political structures to construct their vision of emancipation, Tapashi's location as the quintessential 'non-metropolitan' activist – as a Dalit, as a woman, and as a Dalit woman – would have emerged as a site of revolutionary identity internal to Naxalite politics. Instead, she remained part of the amorphous rural dispossessed in a narrowly defined class analysis. This flaw only grows in scale when the benevolent patriarchal *bhadralok* idealisations of masculinity and femininity begin to inform the gender relations.

Anxious Masculinity and the Rhetoric of Revenge

The expanding scholarship on colonial masculinity, much of which has focused on the Bengali *bhadralok*, suggests that from the middle of the nineteenth century the interactions between the 'manly' colonial British elite and the 'effeminate' Bengali *bhadralok*, epitomised in the ubiquitous character of Bengali *Babu* (government clerk), became a peculiarly symbiotic relationship (Nandy 1988; Sinha 1995; Chowdhury 1998; Sinha 1999; Basu and Banerjee 2006). The anxieties of 'effeminacy' produced elaborate and creative practices of reinventing masculinity among the *bhadralok* in late colonial Bengal, including reinventing norms and practices of femininity.¹³ The armed revolutionary anti-colonial movements in the early decades of twentieth century Bengal promulgated an ideal of militarised Hindu masculinity as the core of patriotism, in contrast to the Gandhian model. The search for an alternative vision of revolution, distinctive from the Gandhian mass movement, Subho Basu and Sikata Banerjee argue, 'explains the revolutionary penchant of Bengali elites to forge critical connections with wider Marxist movements or the right-wing militarism of Japan' (Basu and Banerjee 2006, 478). Basu and Banerjee have articulated the emergence of 'political manhood' through representations of hypermasculine upper-caste Hindu *bhadralok* identity in the 1920s. This idea of political manhood gradually found its way into communist practice of 'becoming de-classed' (translated into Bengali language as *Srenichyuti* or *Srenityag*) from the 1930s to 1960s.

The practice of 'becoming de-classed' refers to the process of denouncing middle-class identity through self reflection and to develop a fundamental association with the exploited classes. However, even though the middle-class communist intelligentsia considered complete identification with peasants and workers as their primary responsibility, their traditional perception of the exploited classes were marked by 'an innate sense of estrangement and tacit condescension, which was difficult to overcome in theory let alone in everyday practice'(Dasgupta 2003, 127). This affinity between *bhadralok* and communist ideals of masculinity and its tension produced an anxiety which was closely linked with the fine, often indistinguishable line that separates the gender relations and sexual mores of poorer sections of middle-class, or lower middle-class as per popular vocabulary, from that of the working-class. People belonging to these classes generally lived in the same areas and shared similar standards of living but differed considerably in their particular cultures – notably the division between the striving of poorer sections of middle-class to retain the remnants of *bhadralok* respectability, and keep a distance from the transgressive social practices of the industrial working-class.¹⁴ This tension was resolved to some extent by the formation of a normative model of selfhood for communists, couched in an austere masculinity. Naxalites questioned the predominance of middle-class leadership in the previous communist movements, criticised the method of history writing from the middle-class point of view, derided *bhadralok* sensibilities, and yet did not disapprove of the middle-class communist practice of 'becoming de-classed'. Indeed, Naxalites upheld this practice as a stepping stone towards 'becoming a Naxalite'. The ideal masculinity of communists (and eventually Naxalites) implicitly supported the perception of women as embodiment of temptation to carnal pleasures, and assertive femininity as dangerous, and consequently refused to engage with the issues of sexuality.¹⁵ Naxalite engagement with this idealised masculinity found an articulation of this anxiety in deliberate suppression of sexual desires which, perhaps, resulted in a distorted sense of embodying revolutionary virtues. There have been instances of serious violence to 'punish' those who committed any 'dishonourable' conduct, even if they were comrades or sympathisers. Celebration of male bravado as part of revolutionary virtue rendered all women as possible victims of sexual violence and translated women's existence to mere physical bodies in need of protection.

If we return to our chosen protagonist of this revised history of Naxalbari, it will be possible to unveil the grid of sexual economies based on caste and gender in relation to violence. Tapashi Biswas could be left out of the official discourse, dominant memory, and most of the academic historiography of Naxalbari because her presence as a single, Dalit, woman Naxalite had no corresponding register of revolutionary activism. In absence of such registers, was there any other available index of recording her activism? To ask, counterfactually, would she be recognized as a participant/sympathizer of the movement if she had done or articulated her commitment to the movement differently? The answer may sound macabre, she could have been recognized as a victim of sexual violence.

There are several leaflets, distributed after 'annihilation campaigns', which contain recurrent references to the victims as women's sexual oppressor. One example,

At the end of her working day when one widow labourer was returning in the evening by the side of the local police camp, a few bloodthirsty, intoxicated, fiends (*raktololup pishacher dal motto abosthay*) pounced on her and tortured her. As this news reached the CPI(ML) activists, the revolutionary committee condemned those police hounds to death.

CPI(ML) Party on behalf of the people of Ranaghat [undated leaflet and a note on the margin states "Copy may be placed on Naxalites Documents File. 22.3.72".] (Archives of West Bengal Home-Political Department, Intelligence Branch).

The fraught questions of sexuality and violence were thus being remoulded into a rhetoric of revenge. The emphasis on revenge, however, requires more attention in case of Naxalbari. By performing the act of revenge, activists begin to existentialise revolutionary violence – the only pure modality of total class-struggle in Naxalite discourse. Charu Mazumdar, the supreme leader of the Naxalbari movement, argued while delineating specificities of guerrilla action, ‘at one point of guerrilla struggle, a general voice will emerge declaring “those who have not dipped their hands in the blood of the class-enemy are not suitable to be addressed as communists”’ (Mazumdar 2001, 91).¹⁶ In this movement, violence did not remain only a means to achieve social transformation. The powerful emotional content of the Naxalite ideology construed a romantic illusion around the practice of violence. The Naxalite conviction in turning the decade of the 1970s into the decade of liberation imparted the movement an aura of magical change which surely was not in the supernatural sense, but rather magical in the sense of intensifying the revolutionary situation within a very short period of time. Revolutionary violence was considered to be an indicator of quickening the pace of this magical change and thus, violence attained an idealised status beyond its instrumentality.

This idealised status of violence constitutes the context of the above excerpt from the leaflet. Since the gendered interpretation of revolutionary violence had always already assigned the status of victim to women and the status of perpetrator/avenger to men, the only available register of acknowledging women’s political participation was suffering. Suffering, however, was also already cast in the *bhadralok* idealisation of femininity, which made issues of labour, social inequality, and desire irrelevant to understanding of female sexuality. Female sexuality could only be perceived in terms of violation of the female body. The extent of *bhadralok* hegemony, deeply rooted in an anxious masculinity, can be best exemplified in the experiences of Radha – an educated metropolitan middle-class activist – thus confirming the absence of an easy equation between *bhadralok* ideals and male Naxalites.¹⁷

Radha enrolled herself as a worker in a small leather-goods manufacturing unit in Garia, then a poor suburb in the southern outskirts of Calcutta, and employed mostly women. These women came from poor families living in adjoining areas and mostly belonged to lower caste. Radha worked there for nearly seven months. Radha felt that beginning any workers’ organization in that factory was difficult due to, what she called its ‘feudal’ setting. This factory, like many such similar small manufacturing units, was extremely exploitative but was run in a paternalistic manner – meagre wage and irregular payment were common but at the same time the manager often gave advances to women who needed money immediately. To quote Radha, ‘[w]omen were bonded to the factory’. As she became close to her co-workers, she talked to them about various issues, organised protests in small scale against the management’s use of abusive language and tried to sensitise them to the sexual exploitation of the manager. This last task was the most difficult also. Radha noticed immediately after she joined work that one particular woman was ostracised by the rest as she was allegedly the Manager’s concubine. Radha began telling them that the girl was a victim who had to suffer the manager’s lust due to her poverty, and others must sympathise with her. The interesting aspect of the incident was her late realisation that others were actually jealous of that woman since everybody was equally poor but only that woman enjoyed an extra bit of help from the manager. Radha’s inability to understand the vulnerabilities peculiar to working-class Dalit women, their reactions to different axes of exploitation including sexual, their negotiations with sexuality and labour reflects her unfamiliarity with sexual economies of caste and gender.

The problem with Tapshi Biswas as a Dalit Naxalite woman arises because she defies all recognisable tropes of feminine vulnerabilities and poses a rather difficult question to the *bhadralok* idealisation

of a woman activist. Tapashi was courageous enough to contemplate her social position, insecurities, and motivation to join the Naxalite politics from an objective point of view. We must, however, keep in mind that the objective point of view in her oral narrative does not refer to neutrality, but rather to the gender and caste-blindness of the Naxalite ideology without making these inadequacies only responsible factors for her marginal position even within the movement. She did not revert back from her argument that a poor, Dalit, young woman like her was at the receiving end of discriminations based on caste, gender, economic well-being, and age; yet she confirmed that as a woman she did not face any specific form of inequality in her own Dalit society. She was not expected to attain the qualities of chaste, obedient femininity of a *bhadramahila* or gentlewoman; she was not supposed to learn only the skills of home-making; her mobility was never restricted within the domestic space. Tapashi was expected to learn all those skills which would turn her into a bread-winner, much like the boys in her Dalit society.

Tapashi, from her girlhood, was already participating in earning the livelihood for her family. She did some small-scale fishing, following the traditional caste occupation, and sold vegetable in the market for some extra earning. She said that due to these activities she often had to miss school, which kept her in a perpetual frustration. The desperate anger which led her to the secret meetings conducted by urban Naxalites near her village, she said, could transform into a steely resolve to join the movement only because she could attend those meetings regularly, unlike her upper-caste school-mates. She became a skilled courier for the local Naxalite group because she knew village paths, alleyways, mud tracks and its surroundings really well. It is not difficult to discern that her Dalit identity allowed her a certain freedom to follow her passionate commitment to the dream of Naxalite revolution.

Rendering Tapashi's exclusion from the Naxalite discourse, and indeed many like her, as 'perceived experiences of personality' ruses over the problem of Naxalite ideology. The invisibility of Dalit women for the Naxalite recruiters, or, their lack of concern about sexual exploitation, or, their status as hapless victims in need to protection, or, as victims, whose violation must be avenged by male and possibly upper-caste comrades point out fissures within the vision of revolution at the heart of the movement. The inability of principal protagonists of the movement – namely metropolitan middle-class, upper-caste men and, to a much lesser degree, women – to understand the specific vulnerabilities of Dalit women, engaged in waged labour or earning livelihood through independent enterprises reveal their inability to perceive a social reality in which all of them were implicated. However, for the Naxalites of the 1960s and 1970s Bengal, one can at least argue, when they had to confront the social reality of caste they resorted to either an emotional appeal for sympathy, or to an emotional rhetoric of revenge. For the historians of Naxalbari, deriding the emotional rhetoric is far more problematic. Returning to the theme of the Naxalite cultural critique, the emotional content of Naxalite activism, and its interpretation in histories of Naxalbari will be useful at this juncture of my argument.

Discourse of Decolonisation and Practice of Iconoclasm

Rabindra Ray has poignantly shown that 'the pathos or urgency of Naxalite events does not lie so much in the abstract theoretical principles they espoused but in their existentializing the theoretical enterprise' (Ray 1988, 45), and yet it is Ray who resolves the issue of disjuncture between lack of materiality in Naxalite theory and their emotional commitment to their ideal through a reductionist reference to personal experience. There is a distinctive privileging of reason, which strengthens the logical connections among abstract theoretical principles, over emotion – ostensibly involuntary physical and psychological responses to the world, but, as Alison Jagger in her critique of such a definition argues,

emotions 'are ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world' (Jagger 1997, 390-1). In case of Naxalbari, the intense emotional content of the movement became the way in which activists perceived the world and decided on the modality of their actions. Their cultural critique, especially the one directed towards dismantling the aura of Bengal Renaissance, contained a particular mode of existentialising their ideology. This critique also constructed the character of Naxalbari in more ways than one.

'The disillusionment of the Midnight's Children (a generation so named in a brilliant stroke of apt self-description by one of its most inventive children) [...] in the 1970s', writes Ranajit Guha, 'could truly be ascribed to a disillusionment of hope' (Guha 1997, xii). Guha elaborates that the revolt of the 1970s was actually 'youth calling age to account' and their belligerent assertion that tradition, which 'ranged all the way from intellectual culture, such as that associated with the so-called Bengal Renaissance, to the highly valorised ideals of Indian nationalism during its encounter with the colonial regime' will no more go unchallenged (Guha 1997, xiii). Challenging the intellectual history took the form of iconoclasm. *Murtibhangar Andolam* or, the movement of iconoclasm was directed against schools, colleges, universities, laboratories which were branded as 'semi-colonial' institutions and the statues of political leaders of the Congress Party as well as nineteenth century social reformers who were branded as collaborators with the colonial regime. Decapitation of statues, burning or smearing of portraits in black, setting fire on buildings marked movement of iconoclasm. The intensity of disavowing a particular cultural heritage was reflected in their ferocity against these symbols and earned the Naxalites wrath of the urban middle-class. Though the Naxalite debunking of the nineteenth century intellectual heritage of the Indian, particularly Bengali, middle-class is often dismissed as an overzealous expression, these acts of iconoclasm represented the new paradigm of interpreting history from the point of view of peasant revolts. Pointing out the antagonistic attitude of colonial intelligentsia towards the peasant revolts, Naxalite ideologue Saroj Dutta wrote in his 'In Defence of Iconoclasm' that young activists were demolishing the statues of the collaborators with the colonial force, to make room for statues of those patriots who remained unsung in middle-class intellectual heritage (Dutta 1993).

However, if this history of debunking the legacy of 'Bengal Renaissance' is analysed from a different point of view, it is possible to identify how colonial modernity left its traces in the 'literate' and 'existential' ideology of Naxalbari. First, let me consider, what and who were the targets of Naxalite iconoclasm. It is interesting to note that many of the doyens of Bengal Renaissance like Rammohun Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar earned their names for reforming women's situation in nineteenth century Bengal and their portraits and statues, along with Gandhi and Nehru, also earned the wrath of Naxalites for their comprador/collaborator character. Historians of Naxalbari have overlooked the complete omission of gender issues in the Naxalite critique of 'Bengal Renaissance', irrespective of the fact that the colonial intelligentsia won much of its credit through issues like prohibition of Sati, widow-remarriage, women's education and such other concerns. Was this exclusion symptomatic of the unease with the women's question that lingered in the leftist movement in Bengal from the 1920s? Rajarshi Dasgupta argues that the cultural engagements of communists in late colonial Bengal matured into a distinctive sense of selfhood and tradition among the middle-class Bengali intelligentsia (Dasgupta 2003). This sense of selfhood was based on indigenous interpretations of Marxist ideas and succeeded in forming an ideological hegemony. The indigenous interpretations of Marxist ideas involved redefining tradition with progressive ideas of radical politics and the 'Left discourse in Bengal', as Dasgupta conceptualises, periodically oscillated between formulating revolutionary programmes and supporting nationalist ideals. Extension of support to nationalist ideals included the nationalist

rhetoric on women as the reservoir of traditional virtues. Women comrades were viewed as excellent mothers who would inspire their sons to participate in the revolution albeit remaining apolitical in their own private surroundings, and as the perfect companion to the male revolutionary who would help the husband (heterosexual monogamous marriage being the ideal form of companionship) in performing revolutionary activities but would never take up significant political action on their own. The ideal of *bhadramahila* – with all its markers of gentleness, chastity, obedience with the right extent of politicization became the gendered counterpart of the *bhadralok* communist. The indigenous progressive interpretations of Marxism retained a legacy of the reformist, benevolent patriarchal outlook from the colonial period, and the Marxist leadership failed to address the structural inequalities based on gender (Kumari and Kidwai 1998).

Placing this construction of *bhadramahila* in the genealogical mapping of caste and gender in colonial Bengal invites us to revisit two distinctive moments in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Sumanta Banerjee's work on the oral/performative subcultures of lower-caste and lower class women in early colonial Bengal reveal gradual delegitimation of a particular women's culture marked by caste. Banerjee shows how these women, engaged in 'disrespectful' professions, mocked *bhadralok* ideals of domesticity, femininity, and conjugality through their songs and performances. Such everyday subversion of the social reform movements, however, took an U-turn in early twentieth century. Through the histories of marriage reforms among upwardly mobile lower castes in early 20th century Bengal, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has reflected on the internalization of Brahminical patriarchal ideologies by these lower castes (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 142-190). The changes in marriage practices were principally concentrated in shifting the practice of bride-price to dowry, lowering the age of marriage for girls, and advocating the kind of education for girls which would make them good housewives. Unlike the gender-sensitive caste movements led by Jotiba Phule in Maharashtra or by Periyar in Tamil Nadu, the movements led by Tilis, Jogis, Napits and Namasudras in Bengal were built on controlling the private spaces of women's sexuality, and idealising women as symbols of honour, of pure procreators of the male line, and turning their chastity into the index of the status of their community. 'The result', Bandyopadhyay sums up, 'was the progressive loss of freedom for women of the middle-peasant and trading castes and some of the Dalit groups' (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 149).

The paradox of colonial modernity in Naxalite thought and practice, thus, refers to an almost unqualified acceptance of the *bhadramahila* revolutionary as the ideal Naxalite woman. The Naxalite project of decolonisation and iconoclasm unwittingly reproduced the trappings of 'semi-colonial' *bhadralok* culture in its most enduring form of benevolent patriarchy, fashioned by the doyens of Bengal Renaissance. Relegating the role of emotion in the Naxalite discourse resulted in, on the one hand, restricting the language and practice of violence in the realm of grotesque, and on the other hand, pushing the 'forgetting' of the sexual economies of caste and gender into the space of silence. The lacunae in the vast majority of the academic historiography, concerns this particular context of the Naxalite rhetoric of revenge – how the emotional intensity of an ideological commitment was couched in the anxious masculinity of the upper-caste *bhadralok*.

This lacunae becomes manifested in the ways in which Naxalbari is placed within particular narrative of leftist history writing. The usual histories of Naxalbari refer to internal debates within the Communist Party of India and its chequered relationship with the international communist movement and situate the movement in a restricted political domain. Rabindra Ray and Sumanta Banerjee, two of the most sensitive historians of Naxalbari, have made comprehensive efforts to analyse Naxalite politics beyond the debates within the communist movement in India. In addition to the internal debates in

the communist politics, these authors have looked into the socio-cultural background of the Bengali intelligentsia and the emergence of the Bengali middle-class with the development of colonial modernity from the nineteenth century. Ray and Banerjee have also contextualised Naxalbari within the history of the Marxist movement in Bengal. The discernable missing link in their otherwise very credible analyses is the absence of gender issues in discussing the impact of colonial modernity on the Bengali middle-class intelligentsia, and the impact of the Partition of 1947 on gender relations.¹⁸ Even though a large section of metropolitan Naxalites came from the 'refugee families' and passionately nursed their flaming rage against the Indian state, this emotional content has remained outside the scope academic history writing. As women from displaced families began to enter employment and occupy the public sphere since 1950s the social fabric of urban Bengal changed irreversibly. For example, Hilary Standing's study on women's employment in Calcutta in the late 1970s shows an overwhelming majority of middle-class and lower-middle-class refugee women in waged work; and Nirmala Banerjee's study on women workers in the unorganised sector in Calcutta in 1970s points out that in addition to refugee women, a sizeable section of women workers were migrants, and 'a significant percentage had migrated alone to find work in the city' (Banerjee 1985, 122; Standing 1991, 24).

Another limitation of leftist history writing lies in drawing a genealogical trajectory of people's heroism in different moments of spectacular mobilisation. The women's history in the communist movement also falls within selective commemoration of courageous women activists from previous movements. The solemn commemoration of women participants of the Tebhaga and Telengana movements in the histories of Naxalbari limit the larger topography of caste, class, and gender within a one-dimensional narrative. If we remember that contrary to the gradually narrowing freedom of Rajbangshi women, caste Hindu women in urban areas were experiencing certain new openings through access to education, participation in Gandhian political movements, and emerging leftist politics in the 1920s, a different history of the history of Naxalbari is possible (Dasgupta 1997, 537-541). Their narrations of participation in the Tebhaga movement and their concern for their oppressed sisters from lower castes who also consisted most of the rural dispossessed rarely notice the impact of the *Kshatriya* movement on Rajbangshi peasant women. Celebrating the militancy of the deeply-politicised peasant women of northern Bengal can develop different nuances if their struggles against the imposed caste norms are taken into account. The leftist historical practice of drawing the revolutionary lineage from Tebhaga to Naxalbari, consequently, may widen the scope for a gendered analysis of decolonisation and iconoclasm.

A Speculative Conclusion

Tapashi remembers her years as a Naxalite as an important episode of her life. She had learnt for the first time to fight for the poor, helpless people. Naxalbari has also taught her to move forward after learning from past mistakes. She affirmed that through her life's experiences she learnt that apart from class, many other axes of inequality exist and all of them need to be contested. Her participation in Naxalbari has inspired her in continuing with the struggle, and this time she has chosen the Dalit movement.

Manoranjan Byapari, the first Bengali author who identifies himself as Dalit, almost echoed Tapashi's political position in a recent conference on the Presence and Absence of Caste in India.¹⁹ He claimed as a former Naxalite and as a Dalit writer that he can visualize the way forward for the oppressed people of India in constructing a new leftist party where Marxism will fruitfully interact with Ambedkar's work, where caste and class will have a productive relationship in building a new ideology of emancipation.

Translating this creative vision into a set of ideological principles will surely take some time. The critical re-reading of Naxalbari from the analytical angles of caste and gender can be a starting point for such a project. While defining the Naxalbari movement, there is an inevitable dilemma in forcing the movement in a specific category within the larger taxonomy of social movements – of which political movement is a part. Was it a stillborn revolution, a peasant movement, a crusade of exemplary idealist middle-class youth against state-power, or a crescendo that the communist movement in India reached between 1967 and 1972 only to plunge into an abyss of terror for the next five years? Perhaps it was all of them and much more. Search for answers to these questions have now arrived at a cross-road where we can start thinking about integrating questions of caste along with class and gender. The finer nuances of the sexual economies of caste and gender in the Naxalite movement warns us against drawing any easy correlation between women's position according to their caste status. It is an untenable argument that personalisation of Dalit women's motivation to participate and the nature of their activism can be the key to include them in the discourse of Naxalbari. What I would like to raise here is a far more fundamental question. Following Ambedkar's analysis that 'endogamy is the only characteristic of caste and when I say *origin of caste* I mean *the origin of the mechanism for endogamy*', I would like to argue that caste cannot function as a social category without gender, that the sexual economies of caste and gender are central to any characterisation of Indian society (Ambedkar 2002, 252). To re-iterate, Naxalite concepts of 'semi-feudal' and 'semi-colonial' are inadequate not only because they failed to take into account varied material conditions of exploitation and inequality; but remains flawed at the very fundamental point of understanding the axes of inequality.

It has been argued that after the repression and disintegration of Naxalite politics, many activists believed that 'a revolutionary transformation of society could only come into being if different oppressed groups, such as tribals, subordinate castes and women, were organised and represented separately, and then coalesced to fight their common enemies' (Kumar 1993, 110). Women's groups began to organise with these views, but as the organisers comprised of women from various factions of the 'far left' (as Kumar identifies Naxalite politics) sectarianism was often a hindrance for developing a common conceptual and active platform. In absence of ideological homogenisation different groups in cities like Bombay and Delhi started to function with their specific agenda, but a larger network of activism was maintained. In the following years, the women's movement in India began to develop newer dimensions of exploring traditional spaces of women's agency, of pleasure and camaraderie, of historical examples of women's resistance. These practices have led to the reinterpretations of women's participation in collective mobilisations prior to the feminist movement and re-examination of women's issues in the colonial and nationalist histories. Stree Shakti Sangathana's collection of women's oral histories from the Telengana movement and *Recasting Women*, a collected volume of essays on gender and colonialism, (both published in 1989) remain testimonies to the far-reaching impact of these efforts in generating a new tradition of Indian feminist scholarship. These intellectual investments on the part of the women's movement have paid the rich dividends in the forms of newer engagements between revolutionary politics and women's issues in the Indian context. Feminist scholars like Sharmila Rege and Mary E. John have commented that the resurgence of caste and minority issues within "women's issues" offers an opportunity to reflect on the history and sociology of caste vis-a-vis gender (Rege 2006; John 2000).

Finally, if we begin to engage with Naxalbari as a product of history it is important to clarify that in this context history refers to a twofold meaning. The first is the conventional sense of history as reflections on the past. The second meaning uses history as an idea of progress, as a lens to look into the future

(Arendt 1969, 27). Including Tapashi Biswas within the discourse and aftermath of Naxalbari involves this radical re-vision of the history of the movement. Following Byapari's inspiring call and Sharmila Rege's argument that 'the recognition of caste as not just a retrograde past but an oppressive past reproduced as forms of inequality in modern society', it can be considered a politically and academically exciting moment of redefining the past and future of Naxalbari (Rege 2006, 5). Scholarly work has now initiated in reviewing this movement from the principal analytical angle of gender. Gender allows amalgamation of different axes of inequality and exploitation to formulate an integrated conceptual framework. This essay has made an effort to unveil how caste is implicated in the understanding of gender and can consequently contribute in reframing the movement. Eventually these new directions of research may raise many more questions than answers, but raising pertinent and informative questions about a movement, which ruthlessly pushed towards breaking new grounds, can be the way forward.

Notes

1. Malos are fisher-folk originally from eastern Bengal, present Bangladesh and are a Scheduled Caste.
2. Interview of Tapashi (with the author) at her Calcutta residence in December, 2004. Her name has been changed. All following quotations regarding Tapashi are taken from the transcription of her interview.
3. One of the important efforts in memory studies has been to supplement history with memory and vice-versa, where history – an intellectual and secular practice of representing the past – is complemented with memory, which is at the same time affective and magical, is in permanent evolution, vulnerable to appropriation, often lies dormant for long and is revived in moments of socio-cultural crisis (Nora 1989). Such differences between history and memory, argues Pierre Nora, takes a subversive turn when history begins to study itself. In order to study its own methods of recounting the past, historical analysis begins to analyse memory and to question the perceived spontaneity of memory. Such methodological approaches analyse the genesis, uses, dormancy, and revival of memory at certain periods of time and through these methodological devices the history of memory, or 'memory-history' as Nora terms it, is constructed.
4. The period covered in this paper is limited within 1967 (the year the Naxalbari movement started) and 1975 (the year the state of Emergency was declared in India for the next two years and freedom of expression was severely curtailed).
5. The Communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML) was formed in May 1969, two years after the violent confrontation between peasants and the police took place in Prasadujote village in the Naxalbari police-station area in May 1967. The confrontation was the result of a dispute over crop harvesting and became violent when police opened fire on the peasants killing eleven people, and one police-officer was killed by the peasants. This event in Naxalbari region gave the consequent movement its name. CPI-ML led this movement from 1969.
6. The government policy of imposing a ceiling on the acreage of land to be owned as personal property only increased the amount of *benami* land, which were controlled by wealthy landowners but were not directly owned by them. Such fraudulent practices and the lack of government initiative in implementing the land-reform policy continued the exploitation and chronic indebtedness of the peasantry. The District Gazetteer of Darjiling states that 'the number of tenants in the Siliguri subdivision officially recognised by the Land Reforms Committee ... was 13,229 in 1967' (1980, 402).
7. The first caveat, however, must concern the confusion between India and Bengal, to be precise, West Bengal. Though India is referred to include sites of revolutionary activism outside Bengal – principally in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar (including Jharkhand and Chattishgarh), and briefly in

Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab – the first phase of the Naxalite movement gained its strongest footing in Bengal.

8. For a detailed analysis of the *jotedar* landholding system in northern Bengal please see Partha N. Mukerji, ([1979] 2002) 'Naxalbari Movement and the Peasant Revolt in North Bengal' in M.S.A Rao (ed.) *Social Movements in India*, Delhi: Manohar.
9. Rabindra Ray has emphasised this aspect of the movement. My own experiences during fieldwork also corroborate with this view.
10. The imagery of slaying the monster of oppression through peasant revolution was ensconced in the 'parable of elephant hunt' – a popular conceptual device among Naxalites. The parable is described in detail in noted theatre-artist and playwright Utpal Dutt's play *Teer* (Arrow) which was written on the Naxalbari movement and was widely performed in Calcutta in 1967 and 1968.
11. Determining the origin of the Rajbangshi people has been an engaging issue for colonial administrators and the 1903 Administrative Report of the Coochbehar princely state makes an attempt to summarise different views that were prevalent in the nineteenth century (Chaudhuri 1903: 123-127). The Rajbangshi caste publicists in early twentieth century proposed that Rajbangshis were Kshatriyas, as the literal meaning of the term Rajbangshi 'of royal lineage' would indicate. Rajbangshi caste publicists like Monomohan Roy and Hara Kishor Adhikari made significant efforts to not only distinguish Rajbangshis from the Koches but also from other groups like Paliyas who 'called themselves Rajbangshis'. The census reports of 1872, 1881 and 1891 show an increasing tendency of identifying Rajbangshis as Hindus and list the Garo and Mech as aboriginal tribes.
12. Sanyal argues that Sadgops achieved upward mobility, not only because of an internal need but also because of the incentive they had in the form of land-ownership. Sanyal has pointed out, "as the landowning dominant group the Sadgops or a large majority of them succeeded in achieving a sense of corporate solidarity with regard to internal as well as external prestige" (1971, 338). However, his analysis remains rather oblivious to, quite like the scholarship of 1960s and 1970s, the question of gender in relation to caste mobility. Tarashankar Banerjee, the most well-known chronicler of Birbhum and a notable literary person in Bangla language, on the contrary has explored the nuances of caste and gender relations in many of his novels and short stories. In his reading of the social fabric of Birbhum, from the 1920s to 1960s, upward mobility of Sadgops is fraught with gendered meanings of caste rituals (Bannerjee 1993 [1942]; 1999 [1948]).
13. The scholarship on colonial masculinity has explored multiple facets of the Bengali response to the perceived crisis of masculinity. Hence, the gendered analyses of nationalism reveal the reconstitution of 'home' and domesticity as the core of Indian 'true self' (Chatterjee 1989); the internally variegated lower middle-class Bengali *Babu* who redefined masculinity in terms of the slavery of *Chakri* (petty clerical work) and status differences vis-à-vis property relations (Sarkar 1992); the aggressive 'redemptive pedagogy of manliness' in the life and works of Swami Vivekananda that combined physical strength with inner spirituality as the marker of Hindu Bengali masculinity (Chowdhury 1998); and construction of a hegemonic Bengali masculinity in the early twentieth century through the idea of 'political manhood' (Basu and Banerjee 2006).
14. Raghav Bandyopadhyay's *Journal Sottor* (2000) portrays a poignant description of his widowed mother's efforts to keep him away from the 'chhotolok' though they had to live in the lower-class areas due to financial constraints.
15. Women who expressed sexual agency (including women's physical adornments like colourful clothing or jewellery which heightened their sexuality) were considered unworthy of participating in revolutionary movements. The mechanisms of such discourse were manifested in the communist leadership's attitude towards women participants of the Tebhaga and Telengana movements in 1940s.

16. Charu Mazumdar (1918-1972) was a member of the Communist Party of India from 1940s and participated in the Tebhaga movement in 1946. He worked with the peasants and tea-garden labourers of northern Bengal. Mazumdar supported the pro-Chinese section of the CPI during the Sino-Soviet debate in India and was imprisoned during the war with China in 1962. He joined CPI (M) after the split in CPI. Later Mazumdar formed CPI (ML) in 1969 to lead the Naxalbari movement. His vision of people's revolution in India was largely influenced by Maoism, and he became the most respected leader of Naxalbari. He was arrested in July 1972 and died in police custody, reportedly following police torture.
17. Interview with Radha at her residence in Calcutta in August and December, 2004. Her name has been changed.
18. It is worth noting here that Sumanta Banerjee's later work on the popular and counter-culture of nineteenth century Bengal, especially of Calcutta and his work on the sex-workers in colonial Bengal remains an excellent piece of research on colonial modernity. However, he has never attempted to relate his later works with his earlier work on the Naxalbari movement.
19. Conference held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in January 2014.

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